

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 002094

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, NEA/P, PA, INR/R/MR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [PGOV](#) [KMDR](#) [XF](#) [KU](#) [WOMEN](#) [POLITICAL](#) [RIGHTS](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: FULL POLITICAL RIGHTS FOR KUWAITI WOMEN

1. Summary: Kuwaiti media hailed the granting of full political rights for women by the National Assembly on the evening of May 16, 2005, as a "historic" moment. Initial reaction in all papers was positive and they are calling the granting to Kuwaiti women full political rights as the first step toward more economic and political reforms. End summary.

"A historic day"

2. Al-Anba front-page editorial on May 17, 2005 (Arabic language daily, circ. 40,000):

When History Speaks Out: The least that could be said about yesterday is that it was a historic day. The period between May 16, 1999 and May 16, 2005 was one of a political struggle for the Government of Kuwait under the leadership of Shaykh Sabah Al Ahmed. Yesterday's move by the government was the biggest step towards reforms since drafting the constitution in Kuwait. Political reform must be accompanied by equal economic reform and development plans for the achievement to be complete.

"Our congratulations and gratitude"

3. Al-Watan front-page editorial on May 17, 2005 (Arabic-language daily, circ. 65,000):

Congratulations to Women and Men: All those who participated in the process of reaching a verdict on women's political rights, whether they were with or against the issue, deserve our congratulation and gratitude. However, two parties should take most of the credit. First is H.H. Shaykh Ahmed Al Sabah who proved that if the government wanted to do something, it is capable of doing it through the cooperation among its various members and under the leadership of his Highness. Second, we must express our gratitude to the Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Jassem Al Khorafi, who managed to lead one of the most difficult sessions in the history of the National Assembly. . At the end, it must be said that yesterday's session was a historic moment that brought joy to the hearts of the people of Kuwait. The leader of this nation encouraged women to work with men on the development of this country.

"Women's rights should be only the beginning"

4. Al-Rai Al-Aam front-page editorial on May 17, 2005 (Arabic-language daily, circ. 70,000):

This Is Kuwait, and this is its Emir: May 16, 2005 was a national day of victory for the Kuwaiti women. It remains to be said that women's rights should only be the beginning of developing our political system, and not the end. We do not want to go backwards, rather, we must look ahead. Women's rights are just the first step towards expanding public participation in the decision-making process, and a step towards reforming the mechanisms of work in the parliament and in the government, and also towards a new contemporary democratic system that avoids all loopholes.

"On the path of political-economic reform"

5. Al-Qabas front-page editorial on May 17, 2005 (Arabic-language daily, circ. 65,000):

Their Rights is a National Day: Yesterday was the end of the 20% democracy, and we moved to a democracy where at least half the nation participates. This is the minimum acceptable level of participation internationally. This is an opportunity to repeat our opinion that expanding the electors' base would not be effective unless we have full participation, and this would lead to the proper reform of the political system. The achievement of May 16th is an incentive to go forward, and here we mean on the path of political-economic reforms, because these are the only things that would guarantee that our great nation catches

up with the rest of the world and preserves its position among the developed nations.

Islamists: Our women will vote and "we will win"

16. Additional front-page headlines from some of the major papers on the passage of full political rights for Kuwaiti women:

- Al-Anba (Arabic, circ. 40,000): NA approves women's political rights, increase in pay in Monday's session, municipality elections to be discussed today; Congratulations ... To Kuwait; Sabah Al-Ahmad asserts government keenness to assign a female minister, international welcoming of the voting with 35 in support, 23 against and Al-Khorafi abstained.

- Al-Qabas (Arabic, circ. 65,000): Democracy flies with two wings. Full women's rights a historic accomplishment for Shaykh Sabah's government; Prime Minister: Women in government soon; Women voters 20-25 percent more than men; Jaber Al-Mubarak: Amir's wish achieved with efforts of Sabah Al-Ahmad; Washington: A step that endorses effectiveness of democracy.

- Al-Rai Al-Aam (Arabic, circ. 70,000): Kuwaiti women ... with full rights. MP's Saadoun and Barad vote in favor of bill. 35 in favor and 23 against, Al-Khorafi abstained as he is keen to remain "unbiased"; Govt. sets aside postponing municipal elections and will only appoint women in Municipal Council for this time; Sabah Al-Ahmad promises a female will be named minister soon; Islamists expects to have majority in 2007: We will register our women and will let them participate and we'll win; Step welcomed internationally.

- Al-Seyassah (Arabic, circ. 45,000): Sabah Al-Ahmad: We congratulate Kuwaiti women ... Now we can name a female for minister; Kuwait's democracy complete with this justice, 50 KD increase in retirement pay and those receiving social aid; Those opposing women's rights tried to delay the voting with "confused talk"; Dr. Awwad Barad, Ali Al-Hajeri and Salem Al-Hammad surprised all by taking a supporting stand for women's rights.

- Al-Watan (Arabic, circ. 65,000): H.H. Amir's dream comes true ... Kuwaiti women elect and be elected in 2007; US: A Kuwaiti step that would have positive outcomes for the region; Municipal elections on time ... Possibility of naming two women to the Government.

- Arab Times (English, circ. 40,000): Legislative blitz amends election law, Women win political rights; Kuwaiti women made history Monday when they were given full political rights paving the way for them to participate in the country's political life; Streets celebrate historic win as "A great day for Kuwait"

- Kuwait Times (English, circ. 35,000): Women get the vote at last, have to "abide by Shari'a"; A Red-letter day for Kuwaiti women!

LEBARON